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„Menschwerdung der Menschen": poetry and Truth in Hardenberg's Hymnen an die Nacht and the Journal of 1797

> „Liebe" ist an allererster Stelle eine Sache der Literatur gewesen, an einigen Plätzen Südfrankreichs im 9. und 12. Jahrhundert, in Italien um 1300, wieder Frankreich und Italien nach 1500, in England auf 1600 zu, in Deutschland erst gegen 1800. Ovid machte einen großen Versuch um das Jahr Null.
>
> Klaus Theweleit[1]

Hardenberg's Hymnen an die Nacht are frequently read as the poetic account of a „spiritual transfiguration", a „rebirth" on micro- and macrocosmic levels that both results from and leads to esoteric forms of experience.[2] According to readings of this type the Hymns are a sort of spiritual diary, relating the way in which an encounter with love and death makes the poet a new man. I wish to

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[1] Klaus Theweleit, *Objektwahl (All You Need is Love . . .)* (Basel: Verlag Stroemfeld/ Roter Stern, 1990) 9.

[2] I take the term „spiritual transfiguration" from Lawrence O. Frye, „Spatial Imagery in Novalis' ‚Hymnen an die Nacht'", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 41 (1967): 583. Cf. Max Kommerell, „Novalis: ‚Hymnen an die Nacht'", 1942 *Novalis: Beiträge zu Werk und Persönlichkeit Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. Gerhard Schulz. Wege der Forschung vol. 248 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970) 183. For sensory experience, cf. Kommerell 176. Eugen Biser labels the poet's transformation „die Entrückung in ein neues Seinsverhältnis", Eugen Biser, *Abstieg und Auferstehung: Die geistige Welt in Novalis Hymnen an die Nacht* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lyambert Schneider, 1954) 16. Hiebel refers to „seelisch-geistige Entwicklungsstufen." See: Friedrich Hiebel, *Novalis: deutscher Dichter, europäischer Denker, christlicher Seher* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1972) 225.

provide a reading that traces this spiritual journey in an alternative fashion, that views the *Hymns* not merely as the immanent and „original"[3] product of poetic genius, but as a part of the vocabulary that contributed to and derived from the „discourse network"[4] of 1800. In the context of this broader discourse, the „transfiguration" represented in the *Hymns* is nothing less than the construction of a poet according to discursive rules or conditions of the late eighteenth century. The *Hymns* are an example of a poet both reading and writing his own artistic identity -- a part of the process that turns Georg Philipp Friedrich von Hardenberg into Novalis.

In a fragment from the year 1799, Hardenberg inserts the phrase „Menschwerdung der Menschen" into a series of thoughts on Christianity and love -- a becoming human through the power of love, a transformation through empathy.[5] Whatever else this phrase may have meant to Hardenberg, it implies the existence of a truer humanity to which one can aspire -- and it is this aspiration that becomes Hardenberg's „project."[6] Selfproduction, within this discourse, is the production of a poet as both art and artist: „a work of art that could behold itself."[7]

This mode of *becoming* is not arbitrary, but depends upon a particular set of rules that organizes the economy of romantic love,

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[3] Cf. Max Kommerell, „Novalis: ‚Hymnen an die Nacht.'" 1942 *Novalis: Beiträge zu Werk und Persönlichkeit Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. Gerhard Schulz. Wege der Forschung vol. 248 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970) 175.

[4] I take this term as the English equivalent of Friedrich Kittler's *Aufschreibesystem.* See: Friedrich A. Kittler, *Aufschreibesysteme* 1800/1900 (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1985) and the English translation: Friedrich A. Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, trans. Michael Metteer with Chris Cullens (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990). For a brief discussion of the term and its English translation see David Wellbery's introduction to *Discourse Networks*, p. xii.

[5] „Religiöse Aufgabe -- *Mitleid mit der Gottheit zu haben* -- Unendliche Wehmuth der Religion. Sollen wir Gott lieben, so muß er *hülfsbedürftig* seyn. Wiefern ist im Xstianismus diese Aufgabe gelößt. Liebe zu leblosen Gegenständen. *Menschwerdung der Menschen.* Vorliebe Xsti zur Moral." Friedrich von Hardenberg, *Novalis Schriften*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988) 3: 562. Hereafter referred to as Kluckhohn.

[6] I use this word in the context suggested by Barnard and Lester's comments on Shelley's *Frankenstein*: „The arduous process of self-cultivation that he has undertaken is coextensive with this auto-production; it is his all-consuming „project", to use the romantic term employed by Shelley. See: Phillip Barnard and Cheryl Lester, introduction, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988) xi-xii.

[7] Barnard and Lester xi.

an economy that identifies „Woman" as a site of veiled truth – a truth for which man must endlessly quest, but never attain. („Sofie ist das Heilige, Unbekannte").[8] It is this veiled feminine image, this obscure object that figures as the productive force in the process of becoming a true poet (a poet who is also lover and philosopher). This is a gender relation that relies upon a form of romantic encounter that is highly serious – unquestionably sincere, and capable of conjoining love, philosophy, and poetry. The creation of a poet within this discourse requires a metaphysical investment – love as philosophy, and the object of love as nature.[9] In other modes, as game or sport, or as pleasure for its own sake, love does not aid in the production of a Novalis. Love – if it is to enact a poetical *Menschwerdung der Menschen* – must be a matter of life and death, an aspect of metaphysical truth.

In my reading of the *Hymns* I dileneate three rules that lie behind this transformative process: first, what Julia Kristeva calls „cathecting an object"; second, the appearance of this (female) object as veiled, silent, and associated with death; and third, a transformation of sensory perception that subverts „traditional" associations – the production of a new body, a body that seeks its pleasure outside of the symbolic order. Finally, all of the elements mentioned here – love, poetry, nature, woman, the body, death – are related to what Foucault identifies as an „intensification of the body" in the late eighteenth century. All belong together as significant components of the particular *discursive field*[10] or *discourse network* that makes Hardenberg's *Hymns* possible.

Each of these rules is evident in the closing lines of the first hymn, which provide an introduction to my reading:

> Preis der Weltkönigin, der hohen Verkündigerin heiliger Welten, der Pflegerin seliger Liebe – sie sendet mir dich – zarte Geliebte – liebliche Sonne der Nacht, – nun wach ich – denn ich bin Dein und Mein – du hast die Nacht mir zum Leben verkündet – *mich zum Menschen gemacht* – zehre mit Geisterglut meinen Leib, daß ich luftig mit dir inniger mich mische und dann ewig die Brautnacht währt. (Kluckhohn 1: 133; emphasis added)

[8] Kluckhohn 1: 342.

[9] As Hardenberg wrote in 1799: „Die Frauen wissen nichts von Verhältnissen der Gemeinschaft – Nur durch ihren Mann hängen sie mit Staat, Kirche, Publikum etc. zusammen. Sie leben im eigentlichen Naturstande" (Kluckhohn 3: 568).

[10] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972) 63.

Within the economy of desire we read here, it is not enough for the true lover to possess his object, to have it at his disposal; he must become a part of it, or force it to become a part of him. In this way cathexis implies metamorphosis, as neither term of the lover's equation is left intact. In a similar manner, Lotte makes Werther what he is (not necessarily through her own volition) as he projects his ego onto her. As she becomes a part of his intense fantasies, Lotte recreates Werther. This production of a *„something of One"*[11] or the transformation of the subject through the object, is a central aspect of the passage from the Hymns quoted above: „ich bin Dein und Mein." The ungrammaticality[12] of the line (not „ich bin Dein und du bist Mein") focuses attention on the strangeness of the experience, as it accentuates the notion of melding or blending into one. The acoustic similarity of the two pronouns draws them together.[13] The necessary result of this melding is the destruction of the body: „zehre mit Geisterglut meinen Leib, daß ich luftig mit dir inniger mich mische und dann ewig die Brautnacht währt."[14] The body becomes fluid, facilitating a sexual and ontological union.[15] It

[11] See: Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Jacqueline Rose (New York: Norton, 1985) 138–39.

[12] Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978) 2.

[13] By way of contrast, the manuscript version reads: „Vorüber ist der irrdische Tag/Und du bist wieder Mein" (Kluckhohn 1: 132).

[14] This brings to mind a passage from Book VIII of *Paradise Lost* (1667) Raphael explains to Adam how celestial beings make love without the physicality of bodies, assuring him that it is more enjoyable than anything he and Eve have yet experienced:

> Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st
> (And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
> In eminence, and obstacle find none
> Of membrane, joint, or limb, exclusive bars:
> Easier than Air with Air, if Spirits embrace,
> Total they mix, union of Pure with Pure
> Desiring; nor restrain'd conveyance need
> As Flesh to mix with Flesh, or Soul with Soul.

John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975) 377.

[15] Cf. Frye 569–70. This mirrors Hardenberg's notion of poetry: „Anders ist die Poesie. Sie ist von Natur Flüssig – allbildsam – und unbeschränkt – Jeder Reitz bewegt sie nach allen Seiten – Sie ist Element des Geistes – ein ewig stilles Meer, das sich nur auf der Oberfläche in tausend willkührliche Wellen bricht" (letter to A. W. Schlegel, Jan. 12, 1798; Kluckhohn 4: 246).

is this sacrifice of the body that becomes the external signifier of sincerity -- an apparent willingness to die, to offer oneself up. This destruction, however, is in turn the creation of a new body or *Mensch* („mich zum Menschen gemacht"), capable of enjoying an „eternal wedding night." What I read in this hymn is a reorganization of physicality that defines pleasure in transcendant terms.

1. Cathexis

> Ich liebe dieses zärtliche, gute, liebliche Geschöpf so sehr, daß mich jeder Augenblick meines Leben verdrießt, den ich ohne sie zugebracht habe.
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> -- Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* Book I, Chapter 6.

> In a state such as mourning, for example, the manifest impoverishment of the subject's relational life is to be explained by a hypercathexis of the lost object, and from this we can only infer that a veritable balance of energy holds sway over the distribution of the various cathexes of external or phantasied objects, of the subject's own body, of his ego, and so on. --
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> Laplanche and Pontalis[16]

Kristeva turns to the notion of cathexis as she attempts to describe the psychology of Don Giovanni from Mozart and Da Ponte's opera (first performed in 1787). The example is interesting because the Don is a lover utterly incapable of investing himself in the object of his desire, a perfect foil for Hardenberg's poet. Death, the ultimate assurance of seriousness for Hardenberg, appears here merely as cliche, *Conzonetta* 17 (Deh vieni alla finestra), for example.

[16] J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Hogarth Press, 1973) 65.

Deh vieni alla finestra,
O mio tesoro,
Deh vieni a consolar,
Il pianto mio.
Se neghi a me di dar qualche ristoro;
Davanti agli occhi tuoi, morir vogl'io.

The utter lack of sincerity – indicated by the fact that the Don has used these or similar lines at least 2073 times already (according to Leporello) – trivializes the very notion of death (with the added irony that his own death is actually very near).

As Kristeva points out, this is „the other side of the world from Romanticism", an eternal game played by a man with no ego and without „cathecting an object." According to her reading, the Giovanni Mozart's music creates (in conjunction with da Ponte's libretto) is „multiplicity" and „polyphony".[17] He is, in my opinion, an artist in the pre-romantic sense of craftsman, not an inspired genius prophesying truth, but a maker of pleasure for its own sake – an eternally questing anti-Faust.[18] To the extent that the opera provides a „moral," it is the call for a more reasoned approach to passion. Those who take the clichés of love seriously, as Donna Elvira repeatedly does, are likely to be duped by a charleton who takes nothing but his own pleasure seriously – which is why she leaves the opera to retire to a convent, the only safe haven for sentimental women.[19]

In Hardenberg's *Hymns* love is not a game, however, and the object of love no toy. The entire being of the poet is focused on one object, as is indicated by the disruption of both body and psyche precipitated by the loss of his beloved. Images of fluidity undersco-

[17] Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1987) 193.

[18] Cf. Alfons Rosenberg, *Don Giovanni*: Mozarts Oper und Don Juans Gestalt (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1968) 9.

[19] *Cosi fan tutte* (1790) can be read in a similar manner, as it views the idea of an all-encompassing passion that brings lovers to the brink of death as hopelessly sentimental and oldfashioned. As the enlightened aristocrat of the opera, Don Alfonso, exclaims: „What sighs – what languishings! What ridiculous nonesense (quante buffonerie!)" (331). Pathetic tears, faked suicides, as well as the traditional protestation that the life of the seducer rests in the hands of a beautiful woman („Io mi sento si male, sie male, anima mia, che mi par di morirel' 369; „Un sol bacio, o qui mi moro!" 356) are all part of the fun of the opera. There is no real possibility of death, but simply youthful exhuberance that must be tempered and schooled.

re the disruptive force of separation in the opening lines of the third hymn, for example:

> Einst da ich bittre Tränen vergoß, da in Schmerz aufgelöst meine Hoffnung zerrann, und ich einsam stand am dürren Hügel, der in engen, dunkeln Raum die Gestalt meines Lebens barg – einsam, wie noch kein Einsamer war, von unsäglicher Angst getrieben – kraftlos, nur ein Gedanken des Elends noch.[20]

The words „vergoß," „aufgelöst," „zerrann," and „kraftlos", all associated with moods of the poet, suggest a melting effect of sorrow. In imitation of the tears in the first line, or perhaps through some causal link, the poet's entire being liquifies. This diastolic movement is contrasted with the systolic image of the grave, a „close, dark room" („in engen, dunkeln Raum"). In the same way the reference to the beloved as „die Gestalt meines Lebens" (emphasis added) stands in direct opposition to the aqueous poet. The separation of two beings that belong together, that should be in essence one, has resulted in the poet's tragic loss of form, with the implication that he could only regain structure by the return of the beloved, the „Gestalt" that holds him together. Until that moment the poet is no longer a true man, has not yet been re-created („mich zum Menschen gemacht"), is nothing more than a „thought of misery" („Gedanken des Elends"). Within the parameters of this discourse network, the disrupted body is the sign of true love.

If Don Juan is a paradigmatic figure of disinterested passion, then Shakespeare's Romeo is the paradigm of cathexis. Romeo is particularly appropriate, in this case, as Hardenberg was engrossed in the play at the time the *Hymns* were created.[21] What is of interest here in relation to the *Hymns* is the way in which death, ever lurking in the background of the play as a rupture with the symbolic order, intensifies an otherwise frivilous teen romance. As

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[20] Kluckhohn 1: 135.

[21] See Hardenberg's *Journal* 13 May, 1797: „... ich fing an in Shakesp[eare] zu lesen – ich las mich recht hinein. Abends gieng ich zu Sophien"; or 20 May: „Romeo las ich noch einmal" (Kluckhohn 4: 35, 38). Hardenberg received Wilhelm Schlegel's translation of *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on May 13, 1797 – the same day as the recorded experience associated with the third hymn (Kluckhohn 4: 35; 4: 740). Hiebel makes much of this fact in his reading of the journal entry of May 13. See: Friedrich Hiebel, *Novalis: deutscher Dichter, europäischer Denker, christlicher Seher* (Bern: Franke Verlag, 1972) 64.

Kristeva points out, „they [Romeo and Juliet] spend less time loving each other than getting ready to die."[22] (For Hardenberg, perhaps, there is little difference between the two activities). This is evident, for example, in the famous balcony scene (Act Two, Scene Two), in which Juliet ennumerates the many obstacles to their love:

> The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
> And the place death, considering who thou art,
> If any of my kinsmen find thee here. (lines 63–5)

The central problem for Romeo is one of being the wrong person – in this context a social rather than an ontological problem. „Who thou art" refers to Romeo's Being within the constraints of particular familial relations. It is the nature of social organization, operations of the symbolic order, that keeps the lovers apart. That Juliet in particular experiences these constraints as social rather than „natural" is indicated by her famous reflections on the arbitrary nature of signs and naming:

> 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
> Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
> What's Montague? It is nor hand nor foot,
> Nor arm nor face, nor any other part
> Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
> What's in a name? (38–43)

The solution then is to „deny thy father and refuse thy name" (34), to break with the artificial symbolic order in an effort to attain true love. Juliet asks Romeo, in other words, to deny the phallic function, to refuse to emulate his father in the Oedipal triangle. (This is, incidentally, the impossible prerequisite Lacan cites for the success of romantic love in general).[23] In order to accomplish this (according to Juliet) he does not have to become a new person, but only more intensely „himself":

> That which we call a rose
> By any other word would smell as sweet
> So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
> Retain that dear perfection which he owes

[22] Julia Kristeva, Tales of Love, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1987) 210.

[23] „Short of castration, that is, short of something which says no to the phallic function, man has no chance of enjoying the body of the woman, in other words of making love" (*Feminine Sexuality* 143).

> Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
> And for thy name, which is no part of thee,
> Take all myself. (43–49)

Juliet's invitation is to a type of symbiosis, a melding of two beings clearly differentiated within the symbolic order – and the very nature of the symbolic is, of course, to differentiate, categorize, and label. In the language of Lacanian psychoanalysis, what we find in this scene is a projected regression from the symbolic (the order of differentiation) to the imaginary (the order of unification), a regression that can find fulfillment only in death. As with all truly serious (tragic) lovers before and after them, Romeo and Juliet's union rests on their ability to escape the social realm. Because they are already trapped within „the prison house of language", however, already fully socialized, this escape is a chimera.[24] The break from the symbolic – often viewed as an escape from language itself, or the creation of a higher and truer language – is only a common aspect of the symbolic itself, and therefore always already culturally mediated.[25] True love exists only in some ethereal (imaginary) space beyond language, symbolized in the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* by references to angels (27) stars (15), and of course ultimately by night and death. It is „night's cloak" (72) which hides Romeo from the deadly hatred of the symbolic order (Juliet's father and brothers), and „the mask of the night" (85) which obscures Juliet from him. Juliet's invitation to Romeo to join her behind this mask is an invitation to join her in the oceanic and imaginary order of death, as the only genuine alternative to the symbolic order is the grave.

The connection to Shakespeare's tragedy is important for my reading of Hardenberg, as I see his project of becoming human *(Menschwerdung)* as an effort to become a modern Romeo. Ro-

[24] Cf. Jacques Lacan, „Function and field of speech and Language" in Écrit: *A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977) 68: „Symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him ‚by flesh and blood'; so total that they bring to his birth, along with the gifts of the stars, if not with the gifts of the fairies, the shape of his destiny . . ." Or, as Alan Sheridan puts it: „The subject, in Lacan's sense, is himself an effect of the symbolic." Alan Sheridan, trans., *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, by Jacques Lacan, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1978) 279.

[25] Hence Kaja Silverman's insistence on the proximity of the Symbolic and the Imaginary. Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford UP, 1983) 162.

meo, in the context of 1800, becomes the paradigm not merely for lover, but for poet as well, as the true poet stands in a particular relation to the feminine. Romeo fulfills the three conditions I mentioned earlier; he devotes himself entirely to one object, who is a figure of death, at the cost of his own body. A Romantic reading of the tragedy valorizes actions that in another context would appear pathetic, if not foolish. For Hardenberg, however, Romeo appears as a savior, in that Romeo's tragedy, as filtered through Wilhelm Schlegel's translation and the discourse that made this translation essential, provides a possible realm of significance for the tragic circumstances of Hardenberg's own life. In other words, a discourse that can take Romeo seriously is one capable of turning Hardenberg's grief into poetry, or even of making such grief the necessary prerequisite for poetry.

The way in which grief becomes poetry is evident in a comparison of the *Hymns* and the *Journal* Hardenberg kept from April 18 to July 6 1797, traditionally viewed as the raw material out of which the *Hymns* grew. In my view, the *Journal* represents the basic material for the poetry only in the sense that it highlights the strategy of Hardenberg's project, the project that turns a man into a poet, Hardenberg into Novalis. This strategy merely follows the path allowed by the vocabulary of Hardenberg's age. He compensates for loss by valorizing loss itself, by worshipping Romeo rather than Don Giovanni. Instead of mourning in the face of death, destroyer of love, Hardenberg makes of it love's necessary ingredient:

> Verbindung, die auch für den Tod geschlossen ist – ist eine Hochzeit – die uns eine Genossin für die Nacht giebt. Im Tode ist die Liebe, am süßesten; für den Liebenden ist der Tod eine Brautnacht – ein Geheimniß süßer Mysterien[26]

Sophie von Kühn, Hardenberg's fiancée, died on March 19, 1787, two days after her fifteenth birthday. He learned of her death in a letter on March 21, and began a chronicle of his sorrow a month later. „Chronicle", is perhaps the wrong word, however, as the journal is not so much the record of what he does, as an attempt to remind himself of what he must do – and this is to be another Romeo. Within the *Hymns* the cathexis of the poet's object is an absolute given. We read nothing of how the poet came to invest himself in his beloved, how he reached a state of utter dependence on her. Narrative details of this sort have no place here, as they

[26] Hardenberg, July 1798 (Kluckhohn 4: 50).

could only temporalize what is clearly meant to stand beyond time („Zugemessen ward dem Lichte seine Zeit; aber zeitlos und raumlos ist der Nacht Herrschaft"[27]). Presumably the lovers have always belonged together. As long as he remains within the language of the hymns, the poet is not caught up in ordinary temporal sequences. The *Journal* tells a different story, however. Here the relation to the object of desire must be vigilantly maintained. True love is a project that threatens to break down, thereby betraying the mystery of death. It is this fear of betrayal which haunts his text, and it is within the gaps created by this fear that I wish to locate my comparison of the two.

The journal consists of 50 entries, each one headed by a date and a number indicating how many days have passed since Sophie's death. These numbers are interesting in themselves as signifers of memory, inscriptions of a duty that must not be neglected in the face of the obscuring force of time. Hence the need for a running record. As Nietzsche puts it: „Man brennt etwas ein, damit es im Gedächtnis bleibt: nur was nicht aufhört, *weh zu tun*, bleibt im Gedächtnis."[28] The journal also attempts to keep track precisely of how often and how intensely he thinks of Sophie – and he sees it as his duty to think of her as often and as intensely as possible, chiding himself when he falls short of his ideal. The result is at times discouraging for the poet: „An S[ophie] hab ich oft – aber nicht mit Innigkeit – gedacht - an Er[asmus][29] kalt. Auch heute hab ich zuviel gegessen" (April 21; Kluckhohn 4: 30). Or from May 7: „Viel an Sofie hab ich heute nicht gedacht – doch einige mal, besonders in der Kirche mit wahrer Andacht." External signs of affect, particularly tears, are also of great importance: „Nachher an mein liebes Grab – wo ich bis um 7 blieb – und recht innig für mich war, ohne jedoch zu weinen" (May 12); this in contrast to May 8–10: „... pflückte Blumen und hin an Ihr Grab. Mir war sehr wohl – ich war zwar kalt – aber doch weinte ich ..."; and again on the same day: „Nach Tisch ward ich wieder sehr bewegt –

27 Kluckhohn 1: 133.

28 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, part VI vol. 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968) 311. The numbers themselves remind one, for example, of the running numbers that accompanied the American hostages in Iran in 1979. Television networks in the United States vowed to mention the hostages – indicating day one, day two, etc. – every day until their release, not anticipating that this would eventually run into numbers of three digits.

29 Erasmus is his brother who died on April 14, 1797.

ich weinte heftig auf dem Platze." This notion of duty is also suggested by the modal „muß" in an entry from April 24: „Ich muß nur immer noch mehr in ihr leben. Nur in ihrem Andenken ist mir wahrhaft wohl" (4: 30). Or from May 17, 18: „Ich muß nur immermehr *um IhretWillen leben -- für Sie* bin ich nur -- für mich und für keinen Andern nicht. Sie ist das Höchste -- das Einzige. *Wenn ich nur in jedem Augenblicke ihrer werth seyn könnte* -- Meine Hauptaufgabe sollte seyn -- Alles in Beziehung auf ihre Idee zu bringen" (4: 37). Cathexis requires more psychic energy than the nonpathological can bring forth; it is a *project*, an *Aufgabe*. The very desperation with which these sentiments are expressed indicates the impossibility of living them. Again and again Hardenberg refers to the joining of his psyche with Sophie as a planned mode of existence, albeit one he can never quite maintain, despite his hopeful optimism („aber doch gewissermaaßen ihrer nicht unwerth").[30]

Accompaning such expressions I count at least 16 references to what Hardenberg calls his *decision* („Entschluß"). Although it is easy to read this as suicidal intentions, it strikes me as more likely that he means something along the lines of the passage quoted above -- to live for *her* only, outside of any social context, to live the oceanic life Juliet requests of Romeo, in other words, to move outside of the symbolic order itself (which is, of course, a Romantic form of suicide). The *Entschluß*, then, refuses to give Hardenberg any rest, and its sheer impossibility ensures its immortality.[31] The concluding lines of the journal, clearly meant to convince their author that he has indeed moved beyond the social realm, appear self-contradictory and hopeless to the reader: „Dienstag hat mir Langermann viel Gutes vom Kirschlorbeerwasser erzählt. Heute früh ein ernsthaftes Gespräch über den Selbstmord mit Langermann. Nachmittags nach Gosek Gefahren. Ich will nach Kösen, um allein zu seyn. Sie bleibt immer mein einziges Gut. Menschen passen sich nicht mehr für mich, so wie ich nicht mehr unter die Menschen passe" (4: 49).[32] Talking about not talking anymore is

[30] Kluckhohn 4: 31.

[31] Another way of reading Hardenberg's *Entschluß* would be with reference to what Alice Kuzniar calls the „future perfect" -- as an effort to live in a constantly deffered future, a longing „not to have desires fulfilled but to be given reason to anticipate." Alice A. Kuzniar, *Delayed Endings: Nonclosure in Novalis and Hölderlin* (Athens: Georgia UP, 1987) 93.

[32] Kluckhohn 4: 49. Cf. 6 May: „Ich kann mit meiner Treue, mit meinem Andenken zufrieden seyn" (Kluckhohn 4: 33). The very fact that he must write this calls its veracity into question.

the closest Hardenberg comes to living his *Entschluß*. And the most serious form of this talking about not talking is *The Hymns to the Night*.

The journal thus reflects the way in which Hardenberg writes himself as a function of the vocabulary of his age. From a purely lexical perspective, this is well represented by his repeated use of the adjective *innig* and the related noun *Innigkeit* as signifiers of intensity. The Grimms' *Deutsches Wörterbuch* lists four definitions for *innig*, and number two of the four is quite revealing: „in der neueren sprache häufig als edles wort für tiefe empfindungen . . ." There are two occurrences in passages from the journal entries of April 21 and May 12 quoted above, both referring to the poet's emotional state as he thought about Sophie. The state indicated by the word seems the psychological equivalent of the external sign of tears. True lovers are *innig*, and they demonstrate this by crying often. This connection is evident, for example, in the entry from May 12: „recht innig für mich . . ., ohne jedoch zu weinen." The implication is that this experience represents an exception, that the emotion indicated by *innig* is most often accompanied by tears. Hardenberg's insistence on this signifier as an indicator of ideal affect underscores intensity („tiefe Empfindung") as the proper relation to desire within the discourse of 1800.

2. The Object of Desire

> „Mit der zarten Blüte meiner Neigung ist es vorbei, sobald ich gemeine Gunstbezeugungen erhalte."
>
> Hardenberg in a letter to his brother Erasmus, 1794.[33]
>
> „Xstus und *Sophie*."
>
> – Hardenberg, *Journal* June 16–29.

The emotional state of the subject implied by the word *innig* is also related to the nature of the object. Desire creates an object appro-

[33] Kluckhohn 4: 366. Hardenberg's letter to his brother Erasmus describing his first meeting with Sophie has not been preserved. This line, however, is a direct quotation from that letter, which appears in Erasmus's reply dated 28 Nov., 1794.

priate to its ends, and for this reason an idealization of the feminine stands behind both the *Journal* and the *Hymns*. Woman as human being is insufficient to sustain the internalized fire indicated by *Innigkeit*; the need is for woman as nature, woman as truth. As Hardenberg wrote to Friedrich Schlegel in July of 1796: „Mein Lieblingsstudium heißt im Grunde, wie meine Braut. Sofie heißt sie – Filosofie ist die Seele meines Lebens und der Schlüssel zu meinem eigensten Selbst."[34] A fortuitous coincidence underscores for Hardenberg what the discourse network of his age already knew, that women have no need to study philosophy because they are philosophy. „Sie will nichts seyn – Sie ist etwas."[35] What is true of Sophie in particular applies to women in general: „Sie [alle Weiber] sind vollendeter, als wir. *Freyer* als wir. Gewönlich sind wir besser. Sie *erkennen* besser, als wir – Ihre Natur scheint unsre Kunst – unsre Natur ihre Kunst zu seyn."[36] Like other natural objects, women are completed products that exist in relation to men. Men are searchers, women are objects of a quest.

That Hardenberg was not alone in his views on gender differentiation is evident in numerous texts from the period. Kittler's extensive work in this area in his *Aufschreibesysteme* demonstrates, indeed, that within the discourse of 1800 there was no clear distinction between love, woman, and nature: „Natur, Liebe, Frau – im Aufschreibesystem von 1800 sind sie synonym. Sie produzieren einen Urdiskurs, den dann Dichter aus seiner Stummheit heraus- und übersetzten."[37] This *Urdiskurs*, which women create, is simply poetry itself.[38] Kittler focuses, for example, on Faust and Gretchen, pointing out that the Faust of 1800, like Romeo, and unlike his various predecessors, focuses his desire on an exclusive object.[39]

Schiller's „Würde der Frauen" (1795) is a crasser representation of this gender relation, specifically defining woman as truth through nature, the site of wholeness and harmony. Women are natural („Treue Töchter der frommen Natur"), capable of insight

[34] Kluckhohn 4: 188.
[35] Kluckhohn 4: 24.
[36] Kluckhohn 4: 25.
[37] Kittler 79.
[38] Kittler 31.
[39] Kittler 32: „Wo der Dr. Faust der *Historia* aus gutem satanologischen Grund Abenteuer mit vielen Frauen haben durfte und mußte, erscheint in der Tragödie die Eine . . ."

without reflection („die fühlende Seele der Frau"), and generally wiser than men („Reicher als er in des Wissens Bezirken"). None of this comes to them through effort on their part, however, but simply by virtue of their being. In this way the feminine is universalized and made metaphysical -- woman as site of truth and meaning, Sophie as *Philosophie.*

The nature of the metaphysical, of course, is to remain obscure and forever just out of reach, and Schiller's „Das verschleierte Bild zu Sais" (1795) is a paradigmatic expression of this notion of truth.[40] The object of desire in this poem is „Geheime Weisheit," which „the law" requires one approach only through a gradual process after proper initiation („Schon manchen Grad mit schnellem Geist durcheilt"). Truth (in the figure of a veiled image) appears as a woman. Its violation by the *Jüngling,* who is overcome by „des Wissens brennende Begier" -- by the „truth at any price" („Warheit um jeden Preis") mentality Nietzsche views as old-fashioned --[41] and cannot keep himself within the law, is a rape. The law, however, exacts retribution, and his rashness is punished by the loss of his senses, and shortly thereafter, his life: „Weh dem, der zu der Wahrheit geht durch Schuld!". Truth is sacred, and must be shrouded from the gaze of the impure. It is always present, but never reachable. The figure of the veil is the perfect expression of this metaphysical impulse as it disallows superficiality by insisting that something deeper lies beyond it. Reliance on the veil insures that surfaces are merely indicators of the beyond. In this way all veils become screens for endless projection, actualizing eternal possibilities.

„The mask of the night," worn by Juliet, thus becomes for Hardenberg the only real possibility of comfort in the face of Sophie's death. What we read in the *Journal* is the attempt to convince himself that her death is preferable to her life as it allows a metaphysical relationship in place of a physical one. Veiled and silent, that is, within the silence of the grave, Sophie becomes the perfect object of true love -- Romeo's Juliet. The trouble with all of this as far as the journal is concerned is that it is an attempt to represent

[40] Cf. Mary Ann Doane, „Veiling over Desire: Close-ups of the Woman", *Feminism and Psychoanalysis,* ed. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989) 120.

[41] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft,* in *Kritische Gesamtausgabe,* ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter) 1973, V 2: 20.

experience – the passage of time over a number of days – with the result that the very banality of life itself constantly disrupts the project. Hardenberg simply cannnot keep his mind off „gemeine Gunstbezeugungen," and so chides himself repeatedly for his „Lüsternheit." April 24, for example: „Meine Fantasie war zwar zu weilen ein wenig lüstern — doch war ich heute ziemlich gut"; May 21: „ein wenig weit die Lüsternheit getrieben"; or June 9: „Die lüsterne Fantasie des Morgens veranlaßte Nachmittags eine Explosion." The demands of the Real do not allow the complete conversion of the physical to the spiritual. Despite Sophie's apotheosis in death, Hardenberg is unable to do away with her body, because he has not yet done away with his own.

3. The New Body

> „Frölich, wie ein junger Dichter, will ich sterben."
> Hardenberg, *Journal* June 11, 1797.[42]

> „Nichts ist poetischer als alle Uebergänge und heterogenen Mischungen."
> Hardenberg[43]

I do not read all of this as some macabre attempt on Hardenberg's part to worship death in an effort to avoid its pain, but rather as an effort to compensate for loss through what Foucault calls an „intensification of the body."[44] The bourgeois revolution, as Foucault points out, did not bring about a repression of the body in its relation to sex, but rather an intensification! which is both prerequisite for and result of the cathecting of a true obj ect of love. Schiller's *Jüngling* (like Werther), imitating Romeo, makes love dangerous again, and therefore serious. All of his energy, his entire being, is focused on one point – an obsession with tragic consequences.

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[42] Kluckhohn 4: 45.
[43] (Kluckhohn 5: 288)
[44] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*: an In roduction, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980) 123.

This potential tragedy, however, is also the necessary element for the formation of the self, a „technique for maximizing life,"[45] in other words, for increasing life's intensity (*Innigkeit* for Hardenberg). Along these lines, Foucault reads the rise of the bourgeoisie and capitalism as „a political ordering of life, not through an enslavement of others, but through an affirmation of self."[46] The self that is produced is one supported by the mystery of its own sexual nature:

> Sex is not that part of the body which the bourgeoisie was forced to disqualify or nullify in order to put those whom it dominated to work. It is that aspect of itself which troubled and preoccupied it more than any other, begged and obtained its attention, and which it cultivated with a mixture of fear, curiosity, delight, and excitement. The bourgeoisie made this element identical with its body, or at least subordinated the latter to the former by attributing to it a mysterious and undefined power; it staked its life and its death on sex by making it responsible for its future welfare; it placed its hopes for the future in sex by imagining it to have ineluctable effects on generations to come; it subordinated its soul to sex by conceiving of it as what constituted the soul's most secret and determinant part.[47]

What Foucault describes here can also be referred to by what I earlier called a „metaphysical investment" – love becoming philosophy. All of this stands in marked contrast to Don Giovanni, whose relation to sex takes the form of sport rather than deep reflection. The Don is, after all, an aristocrat – his body has not been inscribed with the intensity of the bourgeois revolution. His socialization has not caused him to seek the true nature of his own being within each bedroom he visits. Hardenberg, on the other hand, was a modern aristocrat who saw the future clearly with the bourgeoisie.

What could be read in the *Journal* as a repudiation of the body – the struggle against lust, the valorization of the spiritual over the physical – is, in my view, better read in light of Foucault's notion of intensification. Hardenberg attempts to come to terms with Sophie's death not by denying sex, but by moving it into the realm of the metaphysical, attributing to it a „mysterious and undefined power." That this effort fails in the journal I have already tried to point out. It can succeed only within the realm of the poetic. To

[45] Foucault, History 123.
[46] Foucault, History 123.
[47] Foucault, History 123–24.

clarify this point I would like to make a comparison of the journal entry of May 13 with Hymn number three – two pieces of writing commonly viewed in connection with each other. The traditional view is that the seeds for Hymn Three lie in the journal entry, that the journal is the „Keim" out of which the Hymn grew.[48] This seems reasonable enough, and yet I think it important to view the May 13 entry within the context of the journal itself. I have tried to outline some of the struggles evident in the journal, as Hardenberg attempts to complete an impossible project, and within the specific entry, the elements related to the Hymn consist of three sentences, a brief transcendent experience. The danger, I think, lies in viewing this as pure *experience*, however. It is an optimistic aspect of a troubled project. The entire entry reads:

Früh um 5 Uhr stand ich auf. Es war sehr schön Wetter. Der Morgen vergieng; ohne, daß ich viel that. Der Hauptmann Rockenthien und seine Schwägerin und Kinder kamen. Ich kriegte einen Brief von Schlegel mit dem 1sten Theil der neuen Shakespeareschen Übersetzungen. Nach Tisch gieng ich spatzieren – dann Kaffee – das Wetter trübte sich – erst Gewitter dann wolkig und stürmisch – sehr lüstern – ich fieng an in Shakesp[eare] zu lesen – ich las mich recht hinein. Abends gieng ich zu Sophieen. Dort war ich unbeschreiblich freudig – aufblitzende Enthusiasmus Momente – Das Grab blies ich wie Staub, vor mir hin – Jahrhunderte waren wie Momente – ihre Nähe war fühlbar – ich glaubte sie solle immer vortreten – Wie ich nach Hause kam – hatte ich einige Rührungen im Gespräch im Machere. Sonst war ich den ganzen Tag sehr vergnügt. Niebekker war Nachmittags da. Abends hatte ich noch einige gute Ideen. Shakepeare gab mir viel zu dencken.[49]

Within the course of a normal day, Hardenberg manages to transfix a particular moment in which he departs from the physical and enters the spiritual. Time stops, but then moves on again, reasserting itself as an omnipresent aspect of the real. The object of his desire melts into his own body for an eternal moment („Jahrhunderte waren wie Momente"). But this is just the 56th day since Sophie's death, and by the 110th he gives up on the journal completely. Lust, fatigue, and the everyday would overcome Romeo himself if he were not a character in a piece of literature.

Poetry, then, is the solution, and the experience of Sophie is written into verse. The object of desire becomes more than a dead girl, she becomes salvation itself: „Xstus und *Sophie*." Within the

[48] Kluckhohn 4: 740.
[49] Kluckhohn 4: 35–36.

third hymn she appears as a spirit shrouded by the dust that was once her grave, liberated like the resurrected Christ: „Zur Staubwolke wurde der Hügel – durch die Wolke sah ich die verklärten Züge der Geliebten." Like Schiller's „verschleiertes Bild," the beloved here appears veiled. She is no longer a 15 year old girl with a body to be desired, but truth itself, the answer. Young girls, like Sophie and Juliet can best compensate for their lack of experience by dying.

In the third hymn we find, then, the very creation of the new body, the body intensified. Like any experience, this is presented in narrative form, with beginning, middle, and end – only in this case it is an end without an ending. In the journal time reasserts itself as soon as the three transcendent sentences are spoken, but here time is pushed beyond the final stage of the narrative. The hymn opens, as I have pointed out, with the body of the poet melting in sorrow. The moment of transition occurs with the word *da*: „da kam aus blauen Fernen ein Dämmerungsschauer –" All old assumptions are reversed in this moment. The melting body is no longer cause for mourning, as it represents escape from physicality; unity with the dead takes place in spirit only. Liquification itself becomes the new tie that binds the lovers together: „und die Tränen wurden eln funkelndes, unzerreißliches Band." The disruption of the body is celebrated as the creation of an alternative mode of being. Without the death of the obscure object, without her veil of dust, Hardenberg could never have been lead to the new land, have become Novalis.

With the new body, the poet deserves a new name. In a letter to August Wilhelm Schlegel dated February 24, 1798, Hardenberg suggests that if Schlegel wishes to publish the Blütenstaub fragments he should do it under the name Novalis („der Neuland Rodender," „der Saaten Streuender"[50]): „Hätten Sie Lust öffentlichen Gebrauch davon zu machen, so würde ich um die Unterschrift Novalis bitten – welcher Name ein alter Geschlechtsnahme von mir ist, und nicht ganz unpassend."[51] Novalis as the discoverer of new worlds – this is precisely the fulfillment of the project of self-production. The new body is no longer oriented toward the realm of human interaction, but only toward a mysterious and oceanic *beyond*. In the fourth hymn, Novalis stands at the border between the new world and the old. Like those who leave Plato's

[50] Cf. Kluckhohn 1: 2.
[51] Kluckhohn 4: 251.

cave, he finds returning to the old world difficult: „... wer sie gekostet, wer oben stand auf dem Grenzgebürge der Welt, und hinübersah in das neue Land, in der Nacht Wohnsitz – wahrlich der kehrt nicht in das Treiben der Welt zurück, in das Land, wo das Licht in ewiger Unruh hauset."[52] For „Treiben der Welt" we can substitute „symbolic order." Novalis is now the man who „no longer belongs among people" („so wie ich nicht mehr unter die Menschen passe"). He is now a poet, the discoverer of new worlds.

Within the *Hymns*, the new body is oriented toward its object in such a way that failure is no longer possible. The „Hauptaufgabe" is written into verse. In contrast to the journal and letters, sexuality is no longer a matter of lust („Lüsternheit") and base signs of affection („gemeine Gunstbezeugungen"), but is now pure spirit. In this we see Foucault's „intensification of the body" not as a general bourgeois phenomenon, but as gender specific. It is the male body intensified in relation to the apotheosized feminine, and apotheosis requires a sublime silence. Love in 1800 writes Sophie as literally speachless (in contrast to Juliet, for example, who hardly stops talking). Of course, this is partly due to the fact that Sophie is dead, but also because it is her very silence that makes possible the transformation of Hardenberg into Novalis.[53] She does not speak, but she inspires language. She cannot write, yet she makes poetry. She is no longer among the living, yet her very death opens the path to the new land.

This new land, invoked by the new name Novalis, reveals itself as unrepresentable. Like Freud's „dark continent" of the feminine, it is an unexplored, unmapped region „still obscured in an impenetrable darkness" („in ein noch undurchdringliches Dunkel gehüllt").[54] This darkness functions as a veil, which tends not only to render metaphysical, as I have pointed out, but also to eroticize all projections that lie beyond it.[55] In Hardenberg's Hymns, the body of the poet is intensified through the evocation of the feminine mystery that is death:

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[52] Kluckhohn 1: 137.

[53] Cf. Kittler 31.

[54] Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke chronologisch geordnet*, eds. Anna Freud et at. 6th ed., vol. 5 (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1969) 50.

[55] Cf. David Macey, *Lacan in Contexts* (London: Verso, 1988) 182: „The impenetrability of the dark continent has become a blank screen on which the most fantastic of myths and the most banal of assumptions can be projected at will." On the „erotics of the veil" see Doane, 124.

Ich fühle des Todes
Verjüngende Flut,
Zu Balsam und Äther
Verwandelt mein Blut –
Ich lebe bei Tage
Voll Glauben und Mut
Und sterbe die Nächte
In heiliger Glut. (Kluckhohn 1: 139)

Death is eroticized here as a journey beyond the veil into the dark continent, as a *jouissance* beyond the symbolic order, an excess outside of language – „sacred glowing."[56] As Hardenberg does here, philosophy and psychoanalysis have long associated this „otherness" that is death with the feminine, the „other sex."[57] Hélène Cixous, however, notes precisely what Lacan and Foucault fail to mention, that this „impenetrable" metaphysical erotics, this intensified body, is entirely the production of a gendered discourse, of a masculine libidinal phantasy: „Men say that there are two unrepresentable things: death and the feminine sex. That's because they need femininity to be associated with death; it's the jitters that give them a hard-on!"[58]

[56] Cf. Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, 145: „There is a *jouissance*, since we are dealing with *jouissance*, a *jouissance* of the body which is, if the expression be allowed, *beyond the phallus*."

[57] Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality* 141. See also Macey 177–209.

[58] Hélène Cixous, „The Laugh of the Medusa", trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *New French Feminisms*: An Anthology, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1980) 255.